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ABSTRACT

This study reports the findings of a questionnaire survey developed to gather information on the general characteristics of magnet programs and to determine the use of magnet schools in overall district integration plans. Thirty-eight of 98 districts responding to the survey reported utilizing magnet schools for integration purposes. Forty-one percent of these districts reported having at least 50% minority populations. Most magnet schools were at the elementary level. Ten areas of emphasis addressed in magnet schools were identified: (1) fine arts; (2) career/vocational technical education; (3) academic; (4) basic skills; (5) administrative/structural alteration; (6) gifted and talented; (7) early childhood education; (8) handicapped; and (10) miscellaneous (areas by which their titles defied categorization). Correlation analysis suggested no clear patterns between school district and magnet school characteristics. Tables of data are appended. (Author/MK)

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MAGNET SCHOOLS UTILIZED FOR VOLUNTARY INTEGRATION: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In a national survey, 92% of 107 school districts returned a 22 item questionnaire designed to identify districts utilizing magnet schools for voluntary integration. Thirty-eight districts, 15 by court order, reported using magnet schools either separately or with other strategies to accomplish racial integration. Forty-one percent of the districts also reported having at least 50% minority population. Districts reported having from 1 to 52 magnet schools, most at the elementary level. Ten curriculum areas were identified; fine arts and career/vocational being the most common. Correlation analysis suggests no clear patterns between school district and magnet school characteristics.

MAGNET SCHOOLS UTILIZED
FOR VOLUNTARY INTEGRATION:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

For years programs with special emphases have been utilized for students with exceptional ability, such as the learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and gifted/talented students. More recently, diversified programs and curriculum have been implemented with the intent of achieving voluntary integration. For the purpose of this paper, the term "magnet schools" refers to a school with a program designed to attract students from their home school through its curriculum emphasis on special student needs or interests to encourage voluntary integration.

Reports expressing the need for magnet schools, how to start a program, limited descriptions of specific programs and ideas on future trends can be found in the literature. However, hard research data are at best lacking. This limitation may be due to the recent development of magnet schools.

To date, magnet school information gathered from school districts on a national basis has not been reported. The purpose of this survey is to collect descriptive information on magnet schools. This report summarizes the results of a national survey conducted to identify those school districts which utilize magnet schools, and the roles and characteristics of magnet schools in those districts.

Method

A questionnaire was developed to gather information on the general characteristics of the magnet programs throughout the country and to determine the use of magnet schools in overall district integration plans. Twenty-two items were written for the questionnaire, ten requiring dichotomous (yes/no) responses and the remainder being open-ended. Some open-ended questions were necessitated to determine variations in programs in the districts surveyed. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in approximately 30 minutes. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were provided to expedite returns.

Since no complete listing of school districts utilizing magnet schools was available at the time, a mailing list of school districts was compiled from presenters at the First Annual International Conference on Magnet Schools held in Dallas in 1977, members of the Council of the Great Cities Schools, a listing of Large City and County Test Directors, and school districts visiting Houston's Magnet Schools. From these sources, 107 school districts were identified.

Results

After two mailouts in the fall of 1977, a total of 98 (91.6%) districts completed the survey. The responding districts represented 34 states and the District of Columbia with a fairly even distribution from the south, northeast, midwest, central, and a few far western states. Notably absent were St. Louis, New Orleans, and New York City. Of the 98 school districts responding, 38 reported that magnet schools were being used for integration purposes. The following is a summary of the responses from the 38 school districts utilizing magnet schools, including the Houston Independent School District.

School District Enrollment and Ethnic Percentages

Enrollment for the 38 school districts utilizing magnet schools for integration ranged from 4,200 to 650,000 students. Over half of the school districts' enrollment fell between 30,000 and 70,000 students. The average enrollment was 98,800 students. On the question regarding ethnic enrollment, the 37 districts responding reported a range of 5% to 82% minority enrollment. Fifteen (41%) of the 37 districts reported having at least 50% minority enrollment. (See Appendix A)

Number of Magnet Schools by Level

The total number of magnet schools reported by the 38 districts was 410. The number per district ranged from 1 to 52, with 50% of the districts having less than five. Three (8%) had over 40 and the remainder were distributed between 10 and 30 producing a distinct, positive skew to the distribution. Regarding the level of the magnet schools, 31 school districts reported having elementary magnet schools ranging in number per district from 1 to 33. Approximately two-thirds of the 31 school districts have from 1 to 5 elementary magnet schools. Eight (8) school districts reported having magnet middle schools ranging in number per district from 1 to 4. Another eight (8) districts reported having junior high magnet schools ranging in number per district from 1 to 11 with all but two districts ranging from 2 to 6. Twenty-five (25) districts reported having senior high magnet schools ranging in number per district from 1 to 10. Thirteen (13) school districts reported having "other" magnet schools. Included in this "other" category were primarily programs which incorporated grades other than those traditionally found in elementary or secondary schools and cluster or satellite type programs. (See Appendix B)

Years in Operation, Magnet School Enrollment, and Pupil/Teacher Ratio

Regarding the number of years in operation, program ages for the 38 school districts ranged from 1 to 12 years. Twenty-eight (74%) of the school districts' magnet schools have been in operation only

1 to 6 years. Reported magnet school student enrollment in the 37 responding school districts ranged from 50 to 35,000 students with an average of 5,639. Twenty-six (26) or 70% of the school districts had between 50 students and 4,800. The pupil/teacher ratios were reported separately for elementary and secondary by many of the 35 reporting school districts. The pupil/teacher ratios ranged from 12:1 to 30:1. Twenty-five (71%) school districts fell in the 21:1 to 30:1 range. (See Appendix B)

Curriculum Areas

The magnet schools' special emphasis areas reported by the 38 school districts were broken into 10 general categories. In rank order, beginning with the most frequently reported category, they are: fine arts (and related areas), career/vocational/technical education, academic, basic skills, administrative/structural alteration, gifted and talented, early childhood education, bilingual/bicultural (including multicultural), handicapped and miscellaneous. This last category includes several curriculum emphasis areas which by their titles defied being categorized. These were astronomy, outdoor education/camping, ecology, international trade center, global, dropouts, native American, international studies, and multi-opportunity. (See Appendix C)

Twenty-two of the 38 school districts reported having at least one magnet school which emphasized one or more of the fine arts areas. Included in this category were the visual and performing arts as well as humanities and communications. Career/vocational/technical education was second on the list with 20 of the 38 districts having at least one magnet school in this area. Examples of curriculum emphases in this area are computer science, health professions, aerodynamics, and hotel/inn management. Seventeen (17) of the 38 school districts had at least one magnet school in which there was an administrative/structural change rather than a specific curriculum emphasis. Individually Guided Education (IGE), open education, and extended day were the prevalent administrative/structural alterations.

Sixteen (16) of the 38 school districts reported having at least one magnet school which emphasizes academic subjects other than reading, language arts, and math. Foreign language and the sciences were the prevalent emphasis areas. Magnet schools which stress the basic skills (reading, language arts and math) were reported in 16 of the 38 school districts. Titles included in this group were traditional and fundamental programs. Programs for the gifted and talented were reported by 13 of 38 school districts. Eight (8) of the 38 school districts reported having at least one early childhood program. Montessori programs were frequently reported. Bilingual/bicultural programs (including multicultural) were reported by 6 of the 38 districts. Two of the 38 school districts reported having programs for the handicapped specifically in the area of deaf education.

Funding

Twenty-three (23) of 38 school districts reported a budget figure for their magnet school programs. These budgets ranged from $50,000 to $11.2 million with an average of $3.3 million. Two budgets were under $100,000; nine were between $100,000 and $900,000; five were between $1 million and $5 million; five were between $7 million and $8.2 million; and two were $11 million or more. Seventeen (17) reporting school districts indicated receiving external funds for their magnet schools. The percent of external funding ranged from 3% to 22%. External funding from ESAA was most frequently mentioned. (See Appendix B)

Court-Ordered Desegregation and Transportation

Fifteen (15) of the 38 school districts (39%) reported that magnet schools are a part of their court-ordered desegregation activities. Thirty-one (31) school districts reported having other desegregation activities in addition to magnet schools. Those additional desegregation activities which were reported most frequently were (from most frequent to least frequent): changed boundaries, voluntary transfer, pairing, majority-to-minority transfer, busing, and open enrollment. Twenty-four (24) school districts reported that free transportation is provided to all magnet school students. (See Appendix A)

Program Success

When asked if the school district felt that their magnet schools were successful, 38 or 100% responded affirmatively. Such a positive response indicated that district personnel believe magnet schools are meeting their goals. Brochures describing a school district's magnet program are available from 27 or 71% of the 38 school districts. As would be expected, they vary from general information brochures to detailed catalogues. (See Appendix A)

Correlational Analysis

Correlation analysis indicated several significant realtionships among selected variables. The percentage of minority students correlated significantly, and in a positive direction with the size of the school district (r=.37, p=.01), court order to desegegrate (r=.24, p=.08), and the use of other desegregation activities (r=.30, p=.04). As expected, the number of magnet schools is related to the size of the magnet school enrollment (r=.82, p=.001) and magnet school budget (r=.50, p=.01). Finally, the longer the district has had magnet schools, the more they tend to be involved with multiple desegregation activities (r=.24, p=.08).

Conclusions

Magnet schools for integration purposes are used by school districts which differ greatly in size and ethnic enrollment. A variety of programs have been developed for all ages with the emphasis on elementary fine arts programs and secondary career/vocational/technical education programs. Although some correlation coefficients were statistically significant, no clear pattern of district and magnet school characteristics emerged from the survey.

A complete up-to-date list of school districts utilizing magnet schools and the characteristics of both is difficult to establish with their number increasing so rapidly. It is hoped that the information provided by this survey will aid school districts with magnet schools as well as those districts developing magnet schools or even considering implementing them. Information from this survey will enable school districts with similar programs or characteristics to share experiences or possible solutions to common problems.

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APPENDIX A

RESPONDING SCHOOL DISTRICTS UTILIZING MAGNET SCHOOLS,
WITH OR WITHOUT ADDITIONAL DESEGREGATION STRATEGIES,
ENROLLMENT AND PERCENT OF MINORITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT

	Total Enrollment	Percent Minorities	Additional Strategies
* Akron Public Schools, OH	45,227	32	yes
* Birmingham Public Schools, AL	52,000	**	yes
* Boston Public Schools, MA	19,206	54	no
Broward County Schools, FL	139,000	25	no
* Buffalo Public Schools, NY	51,233	50	yes
Charleston County School District, SC	49,500	50	yes
* Chicago Public Schools, IL	520,000	75	yes
* Cincinnati Public Schools, OH	65,684	53	yes
* Cleveland Public School District, OH	122,706	62	yes
* Columbus City School District, OH	96,571	33	yes
* Cook County Elementary School District, TX	4,200	28	yes
Corpus Christi Independent School District, TX	40,000	65	**
* Dallas Independent School District, TX	140,000	62	yes
* Dayton City Schools, OH	37,103	54	yes
* Des Moines Independent Community School Dist., IA	38,000	13	yes
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA	68,000	38	yes
* Flint Community Schools, MI	38,000	56	yes
* Houston Independent School District, TX	207,000	68	yes
Indianapolis Public Schools, IN	82,002	45	yes
* Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	116,500	20	no
* Jersey City Public Schools, NJ	35,400	76	yes
Long Beach Unified School District, CA	58,000	33	yes
Los Angeles Unified School District, CA	650,000	67	**
* Milwaukee School District, WI	103,000	44	yes
* Minneapolis Public School, MN	45,000	27	yes
* Montgomery County Public Schools, MD	117,630	22	yes
* Neptune Township Public Schools, NJ	6,173	48	yes
* Omaha School District, NE	51,947	26	no
Philadelphia School District, PA	258,000	67	yes
* Portland Public School District, OR	62,000	18	yes
* Richardson Independent School District, TX	38,291	5	yes
Richmond Public Schools, VA	35,464	82	yes
* St. Paul Independent School District, MN	38,389	16	yes
* San Diego Unified School District, CA	121,423	34	yes
* Seattle Public School District, WA	60,000	31	yes
* Syracuse City School District, NY	24,000	33	yes
* Tulsa Public Schools, OK	58,812	24	yes
* Wake County Public School System, NC	55,754	30	no

**Not reported

*Brochures Available

APPENDIX B

NUMBER OF MAGNET SCHOOLS BY LEVEL

TOTAL MAGNET SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, TOTAL BUDGET AND FUNDING SOURCES

School District	Magnet School Students	Number of Magnet Schools: Elementary	Middle School	Junior School	Senior High	Other	Total Program	Total Budget
Akron	1225				1		1	+
Birmingham	1100	3			1		4	+
Boston	19206	10	3		9	3	25	+ **
Broward Co.	2141	1				1	2	+
Buffalo	5302	7				3	10	$ 8,200,000**
Charleston Co.	50	1					1	510,000**
Chicago	6500	2				3	5	11,200,000**
Cincinnati	8602	33		6	1	2	42	165,000*
Cleveland	14227	6			9		15	+ **
Columbus	4800	5		1		4	10	+ **
Cook Co.	400					1	1	250,000**
Corpus Christi	1600	2				1	3	1,230,000**
Dallas	7500	5	4		6	1	16	7,200,000*
Dayton	3096	5			9		14	+
Des Moines	935	2					2	50,000*
E. Baton Rouge	1200				1		1	+
Flint	9800	13		6	8		27	5,000,000**
Houston	35000	33		5	10		48	11,000,000
Indianapolis	250				1		1	+
Jefferson Co.	3500	4	2		2		8	+
Jersey City	3300	4					4	880,000**
Long Beach	2000	1		2	2	1	6	+ **
Los Angeles	600	2					2	883,000
Milwaukee	26627	23	3	11	10	5	52	7,875,843**
Minneapolis	300		1		1		2	+
Montgomery	4000	15		3	3		21	350,000
Neptune	452	4					4	106,800
Omaha	6000				1	4	5	294,714
Philadelphia	1600				6		6	50,000
Portland	+	2			5	1	8	+ **
Richardson	560	1					1	1,000,000
Richmond	4283	6	2		2	1	11	4,252,059
St. Paul	12609	6					6	2,987,432**
San Diego	4300	9			2	1	12	634,804*
Seattle	3000	15	2	3	7		27	8,000,000**
Syracuse	600	1					1	+ **
Tulsa	2278	2	1		1		4	+
Wake Co.	315	2					2	+

+did not respond

*above regular budget

**receives external funding

Magnet Programs Curriculum Emphasis Areas

School District	Curriculum-Emphasis Areas											
	Fine Arts	Career/Vol. Tech.	Academic	Basic Skills	Administration/ Structional	Gifted & Talented	Early Childhood	Bilingual Bi-cultural	Handicapped	Other
Akron		X								
Birmingham	X		X	X						X
Boston	X	X	X	X					X	
Broward Co.	X									
Buffalo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Charleston Co.	X			X						
Chicago	X	X	X						X	X
Cincinnati	X		X		X					
Cleveland	X	X	X		X			X		X
Columbus	X	X		X		X				
Cook Co.				X		X				
Corpus Christi	X					X				
Dallas	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Dayton		X	X		X	X				
Des Moines	X									
E. Baton Rouge	X									
Flint	X	X	X	X	X			X		X
Houston	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Indianapolis		X								
Jefferson Co.				X	X					
Jersey City				X						
Long Beach		X	X			X				
Los Angeles			X							
Milwaukee	X	X	X		X	X	X			
Minneapolis			X			X				
Montgomery Co.			X	X	X	X	X	X		
Neptune		X		X		X				
Omaha	X	X								
Philadelphia	X	X	X							
Portland	X	X					X			X
Richardson					X					
Richmond	X	X	X		X	X				
St. Paul	X			X	X					
San Diego		X		X	X			X		
Seattle	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Syracuse				X	X		X			
Tulsa					X					X
Wake Co.					X	X				